



DIGITAL MISINFORMATION, PUBLIC TRUST AND GOVERNANCE: AN INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Digital misinformation has emerged as a significant challenge to contemporary governance by influencing public trust, institutional legitimacy, and policy effectiveness. Although existing research extensively examines misinformation, trust, governance, and platform accountability, these themes are often treated as separate areas of inquiry. Limited attention has been given to the role of institutional information management in mitigating misinformation-related risks and strengthening governance outcomes.

This study adopts a conceptual research design based on secondary sources, including scholarly literature, books, policy reports, and governance studies. Using thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis, it examines the relationship between digital misinformation, public trust, and governance effectiveness from an institutional perspective.

The analysis identifies misinformation as a governance risk rather than merely a communication problem. It argues that public trust functions as a strategic governance asset that influences institutional legitimacy, citizen participation, and policy implementation. The study further highlights the importance of information management in preserving information integrity and supporting governance effectiveness.

To address the identified gap, the study proposes an Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) comprising five dimensions: information verification, transparent communication, platform accountability coordination, stakeholder collaboration, and trust formation. The framework positions public trust as the mediating mechanism linking information management practices with governance outcomes.

The study contributes to the literature by integrating governance, trust, and information management within a unified conceptual framework and offers practical insights for policymakers and public administrators operating in digitally mediated information environments.

KEYWORDS: Digital Misinformation, Public Trust, Governance, Information Management, Institutional Legitimacy, Digital Governance, Platform Accountability.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed the contemporary information environment, enabling unprecedented levels of communication, connectivity, and access to information. Governments, public institutions, businesses, and citizens increasingly rely on digital platforms for information exchange, public engagement, and decision-making. While these developments have enhanced transparency and participation, they have also accelerated the spread of misinformation across digital networks (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Digital misinformation has emerged as a significant governance challenge because information influences public perception, policy acceptance, and institutional credibility. Studies show that false information often spreads faster and reaches wider audiences than verified information, increasing its impact on public discourse and decision-making (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018; Aral, 2020). As a result, misinformation can undermine confidence in public institutions, weaken trust, and

reduce the effectiveness of governance processes (OECD, 2020).

Public trust is a fundamental requirement for effective governance. It supports policy compliance, citizen participation, and institutional legitimacy. Governance systems function more effectively when citizens perceive public institutions as credible, transparent, and accountable (Fukuyama, 1995; Bouckaert, 2012). In digitally mediated environments, however, trust is increasingly influenced by the credibility of information available to citizens.

Existing literature has extensively examined digital misinformation, public trust, governance effectiveness, and platform accountability. Research on misinformation primarily focuses on information diffusion and behavioural effects (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Aral, 2020), while governance studies emphasize institutional performance and regulatory responses (OECD, 2020; OECD, 2024). Similarly, information management scholarship focuses on organizational decision-making and knowledge processes (Choo, 2006; Davenport &



Prusak, 1998). Although valuable, these streams are largely examined as separate domains.

A significant gap remains in understanding how institutional information management functions as a governance capability for protecting public trust in digitally mediated information environments. Existing studies provide limited explanation of the mechanisms through which information management practices influence trust formation and governance effectiveness in the presence of digital misinformation. Addressing this gap is important because contemporary governance increasingly depends on the management of information integrity as well as administrative performance.

The study is informed by Institutional Theory, Information Management Theory, and Public Trust perspectives (North, 1990; Scott, 2014; Choo, 2006; Fukuyama, 1995). Drawing on these foundations, it examines the relationship between digital misinformation, public trust, and governance from an institutional information management perspective.

To address the identified gap, the study proposes an Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) that links information verification, transparent communication, platform accountability coordination, stakeholder collaboration, and trust formation within a unified governance framework. By integrating governance, trust, and information management, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on governance resilience and information integrity in the digital era.

2. OBJECTIVES

The study pursues the following objectives

1. To analyze digital misinformation as a challenge to governance effectiveness and institutional legitimacy.
2. To examine the relationship between public trust and governance outcomes in digitally mediated information environments.
3. To evaluate the role of information management practices in addressing misinformation-related risks.
4. To assess the significance of platform accountability and institutional coordination in preserving information integrity.
5. To propose an Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) for strengthening public trust and governance effectiveness in the digital era.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a conceptual and qualitative research design based on secondary data. Relevant information was collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, policy reports, institutional publications, and governance studies related to misinformation, public trust, information management, digital governance, and institutional legitimacy.

An exploratory and interpretive approach was employed to examine the selected literature. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and relationships concerning misinformation, trust, governance effectiveness, and information management. The review focused on understanding how digital misinformation influences institutional legitimacy and how information management

practices contribute to trust formation and governance outcomes.

Based on the synthesis of these themes, the study develops an Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) comprising information verification, transparent communication, platform accountability coordination, stakeholder collaboration, and trust formation. The framework is proposed as a conceptual model for strengthening public trust and governance effectiveness in digitally mediated information environments.

As a conceptual study, the research emphasizes theoretical interpretation and framework development rather than statistical measurement or empirical testing.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Digital Misinformation as a Governance Challenge

Digital misinformation has emerged as a significant governance challenge because information increasingly shapes public perception, policy acceptance, and institutional credibility. The rapid diffusion of digital content enables misinformation to spread widely before corrective information can be verified and communicated (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Research further demonstrates that false information often travels faster than verified information, amplifying its influence on public discourse (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

The consequences of misinformation extend beyond communication and directly affect governance effectiveness. When misleading information influences public understanding of policies and institutional actions, governments may encounter difficulties in policy implementation, public communication, and trust maintenance (OECD, 2020). Exposure to conflicting information can also create uncertainty, reduce confidence in public institutions, and weaken institutional legitimacy.

Current responses frequently emphasize regulation, content moderation, and fact-checking. While important, these measures address only part of the challenge. Misinformation operates within complex information ecosystems involving governments, digital platforms, media organizations, and citizens. Consequently, misinformation should be understood as an information risk requiring broader institutional responses focused on information integrity, communication, and trust.

4.2 Public Trust and Institutional Legitimacy

Public trust is a fundamental requirement for effective governance because it supports citizen participation, policy compliance, and institutional legitimacy (Fukuyama, 1995; Bouckaert, 2012). Institutions derive legitimacy not only from formal authority but also from public perceptions of competence, transparency, and accountability (North, 1990; Scott, 2014).

In digital information environments, trust formation has become increasingly complex. Citizens rely on multiple information sources, including government agencies, media organizations, and social media platforms. Although this increases access to information, it also heightens exposure to misinformation and competing narratives (OECD, 2024). As a result, institutional credibility becomes more difficult to sustain.



Trust and governance are mutually reinforcing. Effective governance strengthens public confidence, while trust enhances citizen cooperation and support for public initiatives. However, misinformation can disrupt this relationship by undermining confidence in institutional communication and weakening perceptions of legitimacy. Trust should therefore be viewed not merely as an outcome of governance but as a strategic governance asset requiring active protection through credible communication and information integrity.

4.3 Information Management and Governance Effectiveness

Information management has become a strategic governance capability in digitally mediated environments. Public institutions increasingly depend on accurate and credible information to support decision-making, public communication, and policy implementation (Choo, 2006). Consequently, governance effectiveness is influenced not only by administrative capacity but also by the ability to manage information responsibly.

Effective information management contributes to governance by supporting evidence-based decision-making, reducing uncertainty, and improving institutional communication (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Choo, 2006). Conversely, weaknesses in verification, communication, and coordination can create opportunities for misinformation to influence public perception and erode trust (OECD, 2020).

Governance today also requires collaboration among governments, digital platforms, media organizations, civil society groups, and citizens. Institutions that communicate transparently, verify information effectively, and coordinate with stakeholders are better positioned to maintain public confidence and respond to misinformation-related risks (OECD, 2024).

The analysis suggests that information management should be recognized as a core governance function. Its growing importance provides the foundation for the Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) proposed in the following section.

4.4 Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF)

Based on the preceding analysis, this study proposes an Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) to address the governance challenges arising from digital misinformation. The framework responds to the identified research gap by integrating information management, public trust, and governance effectiveness within a single institutional perspective.

The framework assumes that governance effectiveness in digitally mediated environments depends not only on institutional performance but also on the ability of institutions to maintain information integrity and public confidence. Public trust functions as the central mechanism linking information management practices with governance outcomes.

Table 1: Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF)

Framework Component	Primary Function	Expected Governance Outcome
Information Verification	Ensure information accuracy and credibility	Reduced misinformation risk
Transparent Communication	Improve openness and public awareness	Enhanced institutional credibility
Platform Accountability Coordination	Strengthen information integrity across digital platforms	Reduced misinformation amplification
Stakeholder Collaboration	Promote coordinated governance responses	Greater legitimacy and participation
Trust Formation	Build citizen confidence in institutions	Improved governance effectiveness

The framework consists of five interrelated components. Information Verification strengthens information accuracy and reduces misinformation risks. Transparent Communication enhances institutional credibility through timely and consistent dissemination of information. Platform Accountability Coordination promotes cooperation among public institutions, digital platforms, fact-checking organizations, and regulators to strengthen information integrity (Gillespie, 2018). Stakeholder Collaboration encourages coordinated responses among governments, media organizations, civil society groups, academic institutions, and citizens. Collectively, these mechanisms contribute to Trust Formation, which functions as a strategic governance asset supporting legitimacy, citizen participation, and policy compliance (Fukuyama, 1995; Bouckaert, 2012).

The framework proposes that information verification, transparent communication, platform accountability, and stakeholder collaboration collectively strengthen information integrity. Improved information integrity enhances public trust, which in turn contributes to governance effectiveness. In this model, trust acts as the mediating mechanism

connecting institutional information management with governance outcomes.

The operational logic of the framework is as follows:

Digital Information Environment → Institutional Information Management → Public Trust Formation → Governance Effectiveness

The principal contribution of the IIMF lies in its shift from a misinformation-control perspective to an institutional governance perspective. Rather than treating misinformation solely as a communication problem, the framework positions information management as a core governance capability. It therefore offers a conceptual basis for strengthening institutional legitimacy, governance resilience, and public confidence in increasingly complex digital information environments.

5. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following measures may strengthen governance effectiveness in digitally mediated information environments:



1. **Institutionalize Information Verification:** Public institutions should establish robust verification mechanisms to ensure the accuracy and credibility of information before dissemination.
2. **Strengthen Transparent Communication:** Governments should adopt timely, consistent, and accessible communication practices to reduce uncertainty and enhance institutional credibility.
3. **Develop Information Management Capacity:** Information management should be treated as a strategic governance capability supported by appropriate digital infrastructure, governance mechanisms, and institutional training.
4. **Promote Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Effective responses to misinformation require cooperation among governments, digital platforms, media organizations, academic institutions, and civil society groups.
5. **Enhance Platform Accountability:** Digital platforms should improve transparency in content moderation, misinformation management, and algorithmic governance to support information integrity.
6. **Integrate Trust into Governance Assessment:** Governance evaluation frameworks should include indicators related to public trust and information credibility alongside traditional performance measures.

Collectively, these measures support a transition from reactive misinformation control to proactive institutional information management, thereby strengthening public trust, governance resilience, and institutional legitimacy.

6. CONCLUSION

Digital misinformation has become a significant governance challenge because it influences public trust, institutional legitimacy, and policy effectiveness. The study demonstrates that misinformation should be understood not merely as a communication issue but as an information risk with direct implications for governance.

The analysis highlights public trust as a strategic governance asset that supports citizen participation, policy compliance, and institutional legitimacy. It further shows that effective information management contributes to governance by strengthening information integrity, reducing uncertainty, and improving institutional credibility.

The principal contribution of the study is the development of the Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF), which integrates information verification, transparent communication, platform accountability coordination, stakeholder collaboration, and trust formation within a unified governance perspective. The framework identifies public trust as the mediating mechanism linking information management practices with governance effectiveness.

The study concludes that sustainable governance in the digital era depends not only on administrative performance but also on the capacity of institutions to maintain credible information environments. Public institutions that prioritize information integrity and trust-building are likely to be better positioned to enhance governance resilience and institutional legitimacy.

7. AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As a conceptual study, the proposed Institutional Information Management Framework (IIMF) requires empirical validation. Future research may examine the framework across different governance contexts and evaluate the effectiveness of information management practices in strengthening public trust and governance outcomes.

Comparative studies involving different countries, institutions, and digital environments may provide additional insights into the relationship between information integrity, trust formation, and governance effectiveness. Future researchers may also develop quantitative indicators to measure the impact of institutional information management on governance performance.

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